

As your Representative in Congress, I have worked consistently to improve and increase funding for public education and new school construction. Research has demonstrated that reducing class size, particularly in the early grades, leads to improved student achievement. I consider the allocation of funding for this goal to be a substantial victory for our children and our community. It is also essential that, as the No Child Left Behind Act comes up for reauthorization, Congress is committed to fully funding this legislation that our schools and educational programs are equipped with the resources they need to provide the highest quality education for our children.

More work is also needed to improve our local school system. We must build educational facilities that can meet the needs of record levels of students. This will require our nation to invest significant resources in school construction and modernization. Safe and modern school buildings are vital to our children's future. We need a national policy that affirms and supports that belief. I want to make the investments we need to modernize public schools and prepare our children for the challenges of the next century.

I believe it is essential for the state of Illinois and school districts throughout our nation to prepare for the critical need for new school construction and better-qualified teachers to accommodate the demands of an increasingly diverse student enrollment in our nation's public schools. I will continue to work with my Democratic colleagues to improve our nation's public schools and defeat school voucher proposals that may benefit private institutions at their expense.

I was proud to vote in favor of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act. This law ensures that all new federal student loans originate through the Direct Loan program. These loans will be serviced by private lenders that must keep the jobs in the US in order to qualify as a federal loan contractor. In addition this law invests \$38,925,450 in Illinois' Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Service Institutions. This law also increases the overall Pell Grant payment level to \$5,550 in the first year and up to \$5,975 by the year 2017. This is a \$68,400,899 investment in the 4th Congressional District of Illinois.

Please be assured that I will continue to support our public education system and that I will work toward goals proper funding, infrastructure, and support for our students.